The Central Issue Price (CIP) of rice for BPL families is Rs.5,650 per MT.

The Government does not provide any cash subsidy to the exporters. However, the export prices of rice are lower than the FCI's economic cost, which is Rs.11,760 per MT. The export prices have been fixed keeping in view, *inter-alia*, the international prices.

(c) 1,30,876 MT of rice has been exported so far.

Meeting of CMs with PM on demands of paddy growers

4138. SARDAR GURCHARAN SINGH TOHRA :
SHRI SUKHDEV SINGH LIBRA :

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether some Chief Ministers have recently met the Prime Minister and presented some demands on behalf of paddy growers;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action being taken by Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHRIRAM CHAUHAN) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana met the Prime Minister on August 9,2001 and raised the following demands on behalf of paddy growers:—

(i) The Minimum Support Price (MSP) of Paddy for Kharif procurement season 2001-2002 be increased by Rs.50 per quintal over and above the last year's MSP both for Common as well as Grade 'A' Paddy.

(ii) The Centre should take on greater responsibility through the Food Corporation of India in sharing the procurement responsibilities in the producing States alongwith State procurement agencies and others.

(iii) The Centre should come out with a storage construction plan, which should include furnishing of ten years general hiring guarantee at remunerative rates by the FCI in favour of State, private and other godowns being hired to manage the expected levels of food stocks.

(iv) The Centre should finalise the Paddy and Rice specifications for 2001-2002 in consultation with the Governments of the producer States.

(v) Paddy procurement operations for Kharif 2001-2002 should commence in Punjab, Andhra Pradesh and Haryana with effect from 1st of September, 2001.

(c) The issues are being examined.

Strengthening of PDS in rural areas

†4139. PROF. M.M. AGARWAL: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are taking any effective steps for strengthening Public Distribution System in the rural areas of the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) Government's scheme for providing free wheat and rice to the poor people living below the poverty line through the Public Distribution System?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHRIRAM CHAUHAN): (a) and (b) Government has undertaken a series of measures to strengthen the Public Distribution System (PDS) in the country including rural areas.

(i) Based on the belief that truly democratic institutions do better safeguard food security concerns of all than the State bureaucracy, the Government has also advised the State Governments to more substantially involve the Gram Panchayats in supervision and monitoring of PDS especially at FPS level as a measure of social audit.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.